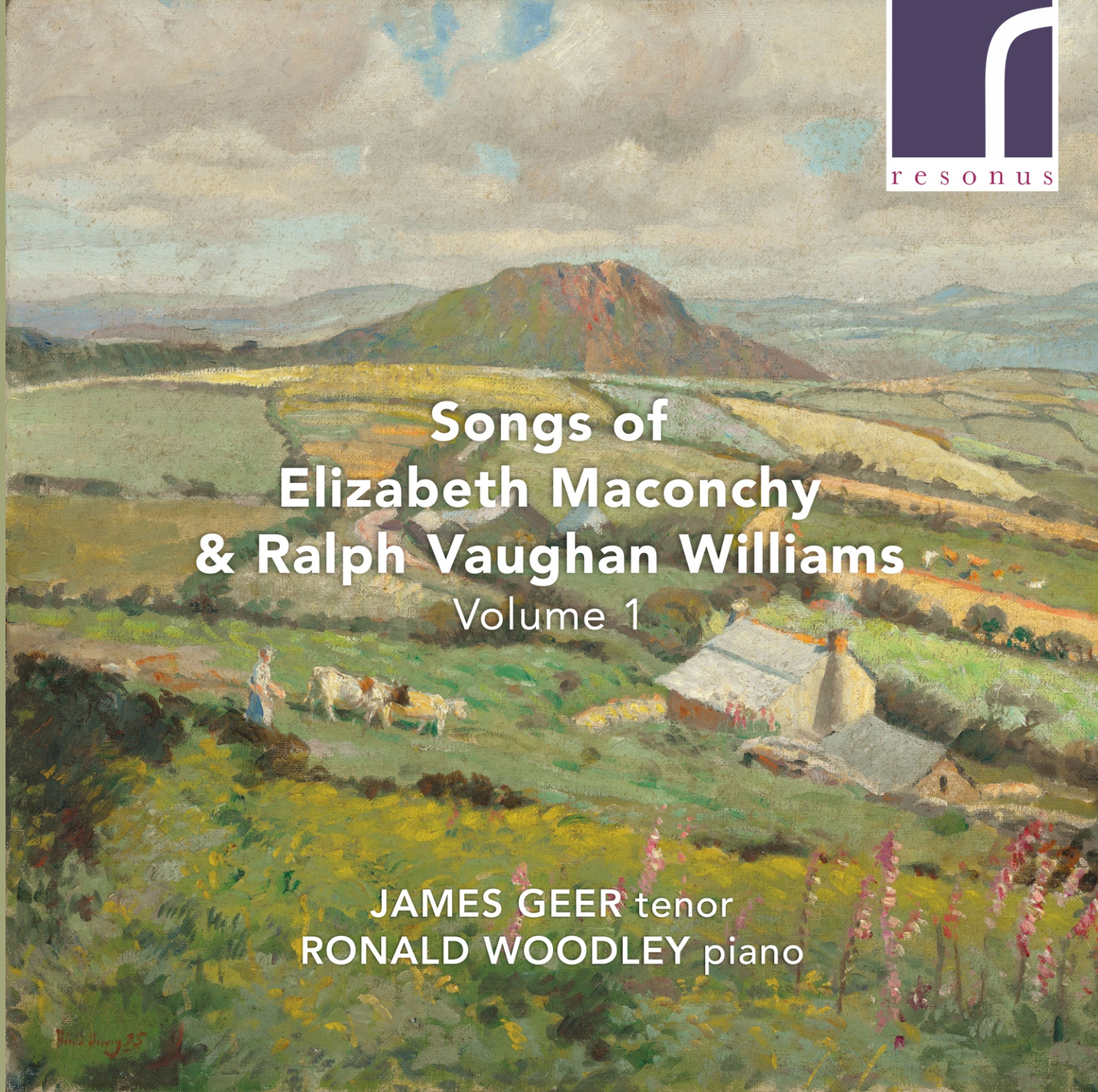
resonus
Songs of
Elizabeth Maconchy
& Ralph Vaughan Williams
Volume 1
JAMES GEER tenor
RONALD WOODLEY piano

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–94) &
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Songs, Volume 1

James Geer *tenor*
Ronald Woodley *piano*

About James Geer and Ronald Woodley:

'[...] performance brimming with good humour and intelligence'
MusicWeb International

'[...] a heady, dense collection of music that requires and rewards repeated listening'
Gramophone

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
Songs of Travel

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Maconchy & Vaughan Williams: Songs Vol. 1

On 1 July 1926, Vaughan Williams wrote to Edward J. Dent, recently appointed Professor of Music at Cambridge University: 'May I ask you for some advice? A composition student of mine at the RCM [Royal College of Music] whom I consider very gifted is anxious to go abroad and study music, especially composition, for six months, or possibly longer.... Miss Maconchy is just 19 – plays the piano quite well and has had a thorough grounding at the hands of Kitson and Charles Wood. She has – as I say – in my opinion decided inventive powers but is of course at present like all young people going through a new phase every month. At present she has been badly bitten by Bartók and is of course anxious to study with him, but I rather doubt the wisdom of this.'

Eventually, awarded the Octavia Travelling Scholarship as the culmination of a highly successful six years at the Royal College of Music, Maconchy went to Prague in autumn 1929 to study with Karel Jirák, increasing her much-desired exposure to European new music. Upon her return to England in summer 1930 she married William LeFanu, librarian at the Royal College of Surgeons, and her close friendship with her old teacher Vaughan Williams resumed, remaining constant for the rest of the older composer's life. Many letters between the two were exchanged across the years, Vaughan Williams frequently addressing her as 'Dearest Betty' and (as with most of his students) signing off as 'Uncle Ralph'. In these we can see clearly how loyally Vaughan Williams encouraged Maconchy's career, not only directly through his letters, but by often recommending her to others for performances, for example at the Proms, or for BBC broadcasts. And beyond Maconchy's stylistic development (which even he did not always fully comprehend), their correspondence shows the depth of their continuing personal friendship, with Vaughan Williams writing from holiday, or with good wishes for Maconchy's growing family, her children Anna and Nicola, and her husband Billy.

In turn, Maconchy was of course enormously grateful for Vaughan Williams's unstinting support through sometimes challengng years. In another revealing series of letters between her and her erstwhile student colleague and close friend Grace Williams, Maconchy admitted that it was difficult to talk about him as a teacher, but 'his real merit ... I'm sure was that he somehow inspired (for want of a better word) one to write better music than one would otherwise have done – & that this is a lasting influence.

Don't you think so? Also he imparted unconsciously a very high ideal for a composer – I mean I know that we – and I think any worthy pupil of his – would be unable to write for cheap effect or against one's better instincts.... Of course, he had a lot of defects as a teacher too, I think – chiefly perhaps his attitude towards brilliance – which he always thinks is pernicious I'm afraid – & being scared of anyone acquiring a brilliant technique.' (14 March 1943).

Ten years earlier, too, Grace Williams confirms that 'Uncle Ralph' was remarkably open-minded about encouraging his students to find their own compositional voice: 'Really, if it hadn't been for him, where would we all have been? We might all have been self-satisfied reactionaries – Elgarians?? ... There's something much bigger about Uncle Ralph's attitude of mind – freer & more progressive so that I think it's a fine thing to be influenced by him.' (March 1933) They both, however, had serious reservations about some of Vaughan Williams's writings and opinions on certain strands of contemporary music, such as his excoriating and borderline racist condemnation of Stravinsky's 'Russian monkey-brain' and 'monkey-tricks', or his more specious (if often misread) assertions on national identity in music.

The present disc, the first of two for this 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams's birth, brings to light a substantial number of songs by Maconchy, almost all unpublished and virtually unknown since their original first performances from manuscript. I have newly edited these from material in the Maconchy archive at St Hilda's College, Oxford, spanning several decades of the composer's career from the time of her studies with Vaughan Williams in the mid-1920s though to her committed espousal of the British modernist aesthetic by the 1960s and 70s. Particularly in the works of the earlier years, we can see playing out Vaughan Williams's perception, in his letter to Dent of 1926, of a composer searching for an individual identity, exploring a variety of compositional approaches and harmonic worlds through the conveniently compact and immediate genre of solo song with piano.

The 70-year span of songs covered here by these two, perhaps unexpectedly connected, composers, starts with Vaughan Williams's **Songs of Travel**. Writing to his early biographer, Hubert Foss in 1951, and correcting some errors in the first edition of Foss's biography, Vaughan Williams stated that 'As regards "Songs of Travel". It was originally written and sung as one cycle. The order was quite different from what is now published and included "Whither must I wander", which had already been published, but not by Boosey's though Boosey's have it now. Boosey's originally refused to publish the whole cycle and chose three – then published the others later.' The first group of three (Nos. 1, 8, 3 of the current cycle) were published by Boosey in 1905, 'Whither Must I Wander?' having appeared in the magazine *The Vocalist* three years earlier. The remaining songs, apart from the last, were then published as a second group (Nos. 2, 4, 5, 6) in 1907. The full cycle, in the current order and including the posthumously discovered epilogue No. 9, was not in fact published until 1960.

In the published edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Songs of Travel* (some 46 poems in all, issued posthumously in 1895) 'The Vagabond' is, as with Vaughan Williams, the opening poem. Here it is subtitled 'To an air of Schubert'. The song known here as 'Whither Shall I Wander?' is simply headed 'To the Tune of Wandering Willie' in the manuscript – it dates from November 1888 in Tahiti, one of many written during the writer's extensive travels in the Pacific. It is not known whether Stevenson had any specific Schubert song in mind, though he was a deeply musical poet, whose notebooks are scattered with notated tunes. But it is hard to escape the suggestion that, heading up his collection, he is consciously referencing at some level the 'wanderer' trope of Schubert, or even *Winterreise* itself, with its physical and geographical landscapes acting metaphorically for landscapes of the heart, mind, and spirit. Equally, it is easy to overlook the sheer originality of Vaughan Williams's writing in his *Songs of Travel* settings, and the extent to which he recast the nature and potential of a distinctively English song-type in this cycle.

Songs of Travel are best known as a baritone or bass-baritone cycle. High-voice performances and recordings, however, of at least some of the songs are known from an early period, including in the 1920s by the renowned tenor Gervase Elwes, first interpreter of *On Wenlock Edge*. In some ways the first song of the set, 'The Vagabond', and its commonly expected hearty, bluff baritone projection, has coloured the image of the cycle as a whole (Michael Kennedy curiously emphasises its overall 'sturdiness') to such an extent that the delicacy and lightness of touch of many of the songs, and their eminent suitability for the tenor voice, have been comparatively neglected. In our recording, we have decided to correct

the transposition of the final two songs, to match the key relationships of the standard low-voice edition.

Turning to the newly recovered Maconchy songs, what is remarkable is how fertile and varied her flights of imagination are when approaching her poetical texts, yet how finely chosen are her musical means of expressing them. There is, however, no simple, linear evolution from the straightforward tonal or modal harmony that one might expect from her student and post-student days through to the atonality that characterises her later work. In **The Cloths of Heaven**, for instance, dated 11 February 1929, far from the glowing setting of this well-known Yeats verse that we have come to expect from other composers such as Rebecca Clarke or Thomas Dunhill, Maconchy gives us something altogether starker. The unsettling, slow-throbbing harmonies of the piano constantly pull against what the vocal line is trying to do, creating soft but grating dissonance. 'Tread softly because you tread on my dreams' becomes the nagging core of the song, rather than its pained *envoi*.

By contrast, Maconchy's setting in the following year of Rossetti's **The Woodspurge** – a strange, opaque poem whose focus on personal grief becomes apparent only towards the end – elicits from the composer an astonishingly beautiful, wistfully radiant arch of music in a clear, subtly inflected minor mode. Maconchy describes in a letter to Grace Williams how the work was composed first as a solo piano piece in 1929, while away in Prague, and then transmuted into song when she read the poem while on honeymoon in 1930. The deliberately slightly fragmented vocal part, acknowledged by the composer ('Not, of course, the right way to write a song'), seems actually to enhance the sense of the poet's frailties, but underpinned by the constancy of an almost classical, rippling piano accompaniment.

Something analogous can be heard, too, in the 1934 setting of **The Thrush**, taken (with the last two lines or so inexplicably omitted) from the John Keats sonnet *What the Thrush Said*, first embedded in a letter of 1818 to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, contemplating the wisdom of quietude amid human activity, and the limitations of knowledge and ambition. Maconchy's haunting response is set in a rocking but unsettled quintuple metre, while the harmonies, with their insistent frictions between minor and major chords (perhaps again Bartók's influence), undermine any sense of easily achievable calm.

Maconchy's husband, William LeFanu (1904–1995), was a brilliant undergraduate classicist at King's College, Cambridge, before turning to librarianship as a profession. He was the distinguished librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons for nearly 40 years between 1929 and 1968, also authoring numerous specialist publications, including work on the early vaccine pioneer Edward Jenner. For his wife he translated a number of Greek lyrics from the *Anacreontea*, compiled by unknown writers in the early Christian era, after the manner of the fifth-century BC lyric poet Anacreon. These were set by Maconchy in 1938 as a group of seven songs, originally under title *The Garland: Variations on a Theme*. Four were eventually published by Chester in 1984, but two of the remaining songs, **Love Stood At My Door** and **The Bee-Sting**, which remain in manuscript in the archive, form a natural pairing in their subject-matter of the wayward and cruel antics of the boy-god Cupid (Eros) with his love-arrows.

In the first of the two, distinctly operatic in its musical realisation, and in its central section reminiscent of the young Benjamin Britten, the poet narrates how he was tricked at his own front door into letting Cupid in, and ends up shot in love. The second, shorter song sees the young and naive Cupid himself stung by a bee, but when he complains bitterly to his mother, Aphrodite (here Cythera), she berates him for his hypocrisy. The earliest Maconchy song recorded here, **Impetuous Heart, Be Still**, dates from 1924, only a year after she and her family moved to London from County Dublin to begin her studies at the RCM. Tapping her Irish roots, her text is a short song given to the character Aleel within Yeats's play *The Countess Cathleen*. Even at this early stage, though, we can perceive the self-confidence and deep expressiveness that characterise all of Maconchy's work, here within an improvisational, modal idiom, the gentle syncopations of the piano part suggesting an almost blues-like influence.

At exactly the time Maconchy was studying with Vaughan Williams, the older composer set four poems by his niece through marriage, Fredegond Shove (née Maitland, 1889–1949). These are taken from Shove's first collection, *Dreams and Journeys*, published by Blackwell in 1918. They enjoyed some favourable critical reception, especially 'The New Ghost', a remarkable, visionary scene of a newly departed soul meeting with Christ in the springtime, to which Vaughan Williams responded with some of his most rapt, other-wordly but

ardent vocal music. Even if Shove's verse is at times a little too idyllically cosy ('The Water Mill') or clawingly religiose for comfort, the composer's settings, published as **Four Poems by Fredegond Shove** in 1925, give it new layers of depth. As with *Songs of Travel*, they are, aside from the last song, rarely performed in the tenor versions presented here. It is perhaps significant in the present context that in the first, 'Motion and Stillness', we also find unexpectedly frictional harmonic juxtapositions of just the kind that Maconchy herself was to experiment with a few years later, in songs such as *The Cloths of Heaven* or *The Thrush*.

Finally, Maconchy's **Faustus**, a 'dramatic scena for tenor and piano' from 1971, sees the composer at a high point of her modernist commitment. Setting a selection of lines from *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), the work narrates in almost cinematic vividness Faust's last hour before his inexorable descent into hell at the hands of Mephistopheles. Maconchy's language in this astonishing, neglected score is ramped up to the full, dissonance and consonance playing out metaphorically (and sometimes ironically) as symbols of hell and heaven in symbiotic tension. When Vaughan Williams penned his 'Whither Shall I Wander?' back in 1901, could he have had the remotest idea what his brilliant future student was to produce seventy years later?

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Texts

Songs of Travel

1.The Vagabond
Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river –
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field –
Warm the fireside haven –
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I ask, the heaven above
And the road below me.

2. Let Beauty Awake
Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest!
Let Beauty awake
For Beauty's sake
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!

Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,
Awake in the crimson eve!
In the day's dusk end
When the shades ascend,
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend
To render again and receive!

3. The Roadside Fire
I will make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom,
And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

4. Youth and Love
To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand,
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land
Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as the stars at night when the moon is down,
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate,
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

5. In Dreams
In dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand
As heretofore:
The unremembered tokens in your hand
Avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace,
Enshrines, endears.
Cold beats the light of time upon your face
And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept a while
And then forgot.
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile
Forgets you not.

6. The Infinite Shining Heavens
The infinite shining heavens
Rose and I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars
Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven,
Dumb and shining and dead,
And the idle stars of the night
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow
The stars stood over the sea,
Till lo! I looked in the dusk
And a star had come down to me.

7. Whither Must I Wander?
Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather;
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree.
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door –
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moor-fowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood –
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney –
But I go for ever and come again no more.

8. Bright is the Ring of Words
Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.
Still they are carolled and said –
On wings they are carried –
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
The swains together.
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,
The lover lingers and sings
And the maid remembers.

Elizabeth Maconchy c.1925
Photographer unknown. By kind permission of Nicola LeFanu.

Photography: David Myers

9. I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope
I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before;
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94)

10. **Love Stood At My Door**
In the middle of the night,
When the Bear-star was turning
Under Boötes' hand,
And weary men were all asleep,
Love stood at my door and knocked.
'Who knocks at my door? You scatter my dream.'
'Open!' said Love, 'I am a child, fear not;
I am wet and wandering in a moonless night.'
I pitied him; I lit my lamp; I opened the door;
A child is there with bow and wings and quiver.
I brought him to the fire,
I warmed his hands in mine,
And from his hair I wrung the rain.
But he when he was warm, said,
'Come, let me try my bow –
The bow-string may be spoilt by the rain.'
He stretched the bow and shot me through the heart.
Then with a laugh leapt up –
'Friend, share my joy –
My bow is quite unhurt,
The wound is in your heart.'

Anon., Anacreontea, trans. William LeFanu (1904–95)

11. **The Bee-Sting**
Love in the roses playing
Was wounded by a drowsy bee.
She stung his hand; he howled.
Running and flying to fair Cythera:
'I am hurt, Mother,
I am hurt and I die.
A little snake has bit me,
The wing'd one the farmers call the bee.'
She said:
'If the bee-sting hurts,
How do you think they suffer, Love,
Whom you shoot?'

Anon., Anacreontea, trans. William LeFanu

12. **The Woodspurge**
The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will, –
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was, –
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me, –
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82)

13. **The Cloths of Heaven**
Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

14. **The Thrush** [What the Thrush Said]
O Thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,
Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
And the black elm tops 'mong the freezing stars,
To thee the Spring will be a harvest-time.
O thou, whose only book has been the light
Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on
Night after night when Phœbus was away,
To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.
O fret not after knowledge – I have none,
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
O fret not after knowledge – I have none,
And yet the Evening listens. [He who saddens
At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.*]

John Keats (1795–1821) * lines not set by Maconchy

15. **Impetuous Heart, Be Still**
Impetuous heart, be still, be still,
Your sorrowful love can never be told;
Cover it up with a lonely tune,
He that could bend all things to His will
Has covered the door of the infinite fold
With the pale stars and the wandering moon.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

Four Poems by Fredegond Shove

16. Motion and Stillness
The sea-shells lie as cold as death
Under the sea;
The clouds move in a wasted wreath
Eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes
Above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes
Vanish away.

17. Four Nights
O when I shut my eyes in spring
A choir of heaven's swans I see,
They sail on lakes of blue, and sing
Or shelter in a willow tree:
They sing of peace in heart and mind
Such as on earth you may not find.

When I lie down in summer-time
I still can hear the scythes that smite
The ripened flowers in their prime,
And still can see the meadows white.
In summer-time my rest is small,
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn when my eyes I close
I see the yellow stars ablaze
Among the tangled winds that rose
At sunset in a circled maze;
Like armoured knights, they ride the skies
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in winter-time I sleep
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;
The angels in my spirit keep
A silent watch and being there,
They cause my soul to lie as dead –
A stream enchanted in her bed.

18. The New Ghost
And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was –
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see
That He kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free –
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;
And the spirit answered,
for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word –
As on a wild, April day, springs a small bird –
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,
And for the greatness of their love
neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,
Over the young crocuses, under the green may
That was not quite in flower yet – to a far-distant land;
And the ghost followed,
like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

19. The Water Mill
There is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it
And in July the swallows flit
To and fro, in and out,
Round the windows, all about;
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
And the phloxes in the garden beds
Turn red, turn gray,
With the time of day,
And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.
The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft, where the sunbeams stroke
The sacks' fat backs, and beetles choke
In the floury dust. The wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.
There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse,
Or showers make the windows white;
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.
The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook, while the mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilit pool;
Bare-foot, bare-head,
Till the day is dead,
And their mother calls them into bed.
The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord;
The young men come for his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take:
She drives her needle, and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold, and the lamp shines buff.

Fredegond Shove (1889–1949)

20. **Faustus**
Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of Heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
[Oh gallop slowly, slowly, horses of the night!]
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The Devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.
Oh, I'll leap up to my God! – Who pulls me down? –
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ! –
Oh, spare me, Lucifer! –
Where is it now? 'tis gone.
Then will I headlong run into the earth.
Oh, no, it will not harbour me! No! No!
[The clock strikes the half-hour]
Ah! Half the hour is past! 'Twill all be past anon.
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!

Oh God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be saved.
Oh, no end is limited to damnèd souls.
Curst be the parents that engendered me!
No, Faustus: curse thyself; curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of Heaven.
[The clock strikes twelve]
Oh, it strikes, it strikes!
My God! My God! look not so fierce on me!
I'll burn my books! – Ah, Mephistophiles!

Adapted from Christopher Marlowe (1564–93),
The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Nicola LeFanu for her help and support in obtaining materials from the archive of her mother, Elizabeth Maconchy; and to Oliver Mahony, archivist at St Hilda's College, Oxford, for his unfailing assistance in providing copies of Maconchy's unpublished works.

James Geer was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, as Academical Clerk in the College choir. He continued his training at Trinity College of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) where he was a scholar on the opera course. James is a Samling Scholar and a Britten-Pears Young Artist. He has appeared as a soloist at many major UK venues, including the Royal Festival Hall, Usher Hall, Wigmore Hall, Snape Maltings, Royal Albert Hall, and St John's Smith Square. He has performed at the Edinburgh International, Aldeburgh and Three Choirs Festivals, and has sung with the London Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, Royal Scottish National, BBC Scottish Symphony and the Philharmonia orchestras and the London Handel Players.

For ten years James was a member of the Glyndebourne chorus; he now sings in the Extra Chorus at Royal Opera House Covent Garden. He is also a member of the Academy of Ancient Music and a regular guest performer with Capella Cracoviensis in Poland. On the opera stage James has performed numerous lead and comprimario roles with Silent Opera, Britten-Pears Opera, Bury Court Opera, Bampton Opera, Caledonian Opera, and Haddo House Opera. He regularly covers roles for Glyndebourne, Glyndebourne on Tour, Scottish Opera and Music Theatre Wales.

Together with Ronald Woodley, James has given over forty recitals, performing works by, among others, Schubert, Schumann, Britten, Poulenc, Grieg and Sibelius. In 2019 they released a CD of songs by Holst, with première recordings of works by Joseph Holbrooke, for EM Records; in 2020 an album *Façades*, including songs by William Walton and Constant Lambert, for SOMM (one of *MusicWeb International* Recordings of the Year, 2020), and in 2021 *Dreams Melting*, also for SOMM, including songs by Finzi, Clarke, Ferguson, Maconchy, and Tate. James has also recorded Britten's *Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente* with Malcolm Martineau (Onyx).

Ronald Woodley enjoys a wide-ranging career as clarinettist, chamber pianist and musicologist, bringing the research experience of a distinguished academic portfolio to his varied performance projects. Appointed Professor of Music at the (now Royal) Birmingham Conservatoire in 2004, he was Director of Research there from 2010 to 2015 and previously held academic positions at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), the Universities of Lancaster, Newcastle, Liverpool, and Christ Church, Oxford. He is now Emeritus Professor of Music at the RBC, having retired in 2018 to concentrate on recording and research projects.

As a performer Ron trained as clarinettist at the RNCM, before completing a doctorate in musicology at Keble College, Oxford. He is the dedicatee of many new works by Christopher Fox, Roger Marsh, Liz Johnson, Stephen Pratt, James Wishart, Steve Ingham, and Edward Cowie, including an exciting series of bass clarinet duos in the 1990s in partnership with Roger Heaton. He has recorded works for bass clarinet by York Bowen and Josef Holbrooke with the Primrose Quartet (Meridian Records, 2016) and in 2017 premièred and recorded the newly commissioned *Sea-change* by Liz Johnson, for multiple clarinets and string quartet, with the Fitzwilliam Quartet (Métier).

As a musicologist he has an international reputation as a specialist in late medieval music theory, in particular the fifteenh-century musician Johannes Tinctoris. Other projects in nineteenth- and twentieth-century musicology have included work on Ravel, Prokofiev, Steve Reich, George Antheil, and, most recently, early recordings of Lieder and pianists in the circles of Brahms and Clara Schumann, especially Ilona Eibenschütz.

Ron enjoys long-standing partnerships with the the tenor James Geer, with whom he has recorded three previous discs of British song (see above), and with the pianist Andrew West, with whom he has recorded Constant Lambert's four-hand version of Walton's *Façade Suites*, with Lambert's *Trois pièces nègres pour les touches blanches*.

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